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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000186

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [KV](#) [MK](#)  
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA BEFORE MIDNIGHT: ACTING U/S FRIED  
PRESSES FOR NAME COMPROMISE

REF: SKOPJE 179

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

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11. (C) During March 7 meetings with President Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski, Acting U/S Fried urged both leaders to redouble efforts to close a deal on the name dispute with Greece to avoid a Greek veto of Macedonia's chances for a NATO invitation at the Bucharest summit. He warned that the USG could not force Athens to back down from its veto threat, but offered USG assistance in the name negotiations -- in addition to the Nimetz process -- if the GOM thought that would be useful. Crvenkovski said there was little room for maneuver left in the negotiations, but agreed USG assistance would be helpful. He offered as a compromise position acceptance of an international name (without geographic or temporal modifiers) to replace the provisional FYROM in international organizations and in other venues where FYROM is used. Gruevski was less flexible, arguing that popular sentiment has turned against a compromise solution. Gruevski said the GOM is preparing for a Greek veto and would work to ensure public anger over such an outcome would be directed at Greece, and not against NATO or the U.S. Fried told Gruevski to focus on a potential success instead, and to use his strong political position to make the tough choices that would secure a NATO invitation. End summary.

STRIKE A DEAL NOW

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12. (C) During late-night back-to-back meetings with President Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski March 7, Acting U/S Fried told both leaders there was increasing support among NATO allies for membership for Macedonia. The unresolved name dispute with Greece was the single remaining barrier to that goal; now was the time to strike a deal. NATO ministers wanted a "fair and balanced" deal that the Greeks would have to accept. A solution would give Macedonia the "keys to NATO and EU membership," a major step forward for Macedonia's future and regional stability. Amb. Fried also underscored that the USG could not force the Greeks to withdraw their threat to veto Macedonia's membership. Time was of the essence, and there had to be faster progress in order for Macedonia to hope to receive an invitation at Bucharest.

13. (C) Crvenkovski said three factors limited Macedonia's room for maneuver -- the short time remaining until the April NATO summit, Greece's intent to veto absent a deal on its terms, and a low threshold of tolerance among Macedonian political leaders and the public for a compromise that could undermine Macedonians' national identity. The biggest concession Macedonia could offer would be to use a different name in international organizations permanently. No Macedonian government in the past had been ready to tread that path, even in the face of a three-year Greek embargo, or at a time when only a handful of other governments had recognized the constitutional name. Greece had sought to turn its right to veto Macedonia's NATO membership into a right to veto any name Skopje proposed. That was unacceptable.

PRESIDENT: REPLACE FYROM WITH INTERNATIONAL NAME

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14. (C) Crvenkovski suggested Macedonia could accept a solution in which a name "different from the constitutional name" could be used to replace the provisional reference FYROM at the UN, NATO, the OSCE, and in other international organizations in which Greece was a member. Countries would be free to choose which name to use in bilateral relations with Macedonia. A compound name could include such variations as "Independent Republic of Macedonia, Sovereign Republic of Macedonia, Democratic Republic of Macedonia, State Republic of Macedonia (or: State of Macedonia), or Republika Makedonija."

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15. (C) If Greece could accept that proposal as a basis for negotiations, then Macedonia would have room for adjusting its position. Skopje could not, however, accept "upper, north, modern, or new" as name modifiers. Crvenkovski noted that the name negotiations had never before included reference to how Macedonians would refer to themselves; the Greeks could not expect to include such conditions in a compromise solution. Amb. Fried said he appreciated Crvenkovski's suggestions, while again underlining the importance of reaching a deal with Athens that would allow Greece to lift its membership veto threat.

PM: PUBLIC NOT READY FOR COMPROMISE

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16. (C) PM Gruevski said the Macedonian public was not ready for a compromise on the name, despite earlier public support for an international name to be used to replace FYROM in international institutions. The latest Nimetz proposal had driven public support for a compromise down, Gruevski said, "destroying the atmosphere" and sparking anti-compromise demonstrations organized by local youth groups. As a result, there was no public will for a compromise and no political room left for maneuver in the negotiations, nor would there be for at least a few months, he added.

PREPARING FOR FAILURE

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17. (C) Admitting that failure to reach a deal would result in a Greek veto, Gruevski said the GOM wanted to prepare the public for that outcome. The government wanted to avoid an anti-NATO, anti-U.S. backlash and would try to direct popular anger toward Greece. The GOM still hoped Greece could be pressured at the last minute to respect the terms of the 1995 Interim Agreement and allow Macedonia to enter NATO as FYROM. If Greece vetoed, however, it would "set a negative precedent, violate NATO principles, and "embarrass" the Alliance.

COMMENT

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18. (C) We disagree with Gruevski's assessment of the public mood for a compromise on the name issue. The demonstrations Gruevski mentioned were relatively small (about 2,500 participants combined) and there has been significant press commentary on the need to reach a solution to the name issue in order to secure a NATO invitation. We believe that a compromise that protects Macedonia's constitutional name, while replacing FYROM in international organizations with something non-offensive to Macedonian sensibilities, would receive widespread understanding among the public as a necessary measure, if accurately explained. However, if the compromise tilted too far toward the Greek demand that the international name be used for almost everything else, including bilaterally, that would be far less likely to win acceptance here. We will urge formation of a broad coalition of parties -- from government and the opposition -- who would back a compromise solution as the best way to avert a Greek veto. We will then work with Gruevski to see if he will buy the argument that, with broad backing from government and opposition parties, he can afford to gamble and lose (if Greek vetoes), or claim a joint victory (if Athens accepts a compromise and supports Macedonia's membership).

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